

TESTIMONY TO COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

RE: PROPOSED FLIGHT 93 MEMORIAL IN THE U.S. CAPITOL

SUBMITTED BY: BRENT D. GLASS

MR. CHAIRMAN:

I AM BRENT GLASS, DIRECTOR OF THE SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY. I AM ALSO A MEMBER OF THE FLIGHT 93 NATIONAL MEMORIAL COMMISSION. HOWEVER, I NEED TO MENTION THAT I AM NOT REPRESENTING THE SMITHSONIAN TODAY NOR AM I REPRESENTING THE MEMORIAL COMMISSION. I AM SPEAKING AS A PROFESSIONAL HISTORIAN WHO HAS WORKED FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC HISTORY AND THIS WORK HAS INVOLVED PLANNING, DEVELOPING, AND PRESERVING PUBLIC MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS, AND HISTORICAL MARKERS.

WITHIN DAYS AFTER THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE WORLD VISITED LOCATIONS NEAR THE CRASH SITE OF FLIGHT 93 AND LEFT PERSONAL TRIBUTES TO THE PASSENGERS AND CREW. AT THE TIME, I SERVED AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION AND THE SOMERSET HISTORICAL CENTER, LOCATED A FEW MILES FROM CRASH SITE, IS ONE OF THE MUSEUMS ADMINISTERED BY THIS COMMISSION. AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, I AGREED TO COLLABORATE WITH THE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO MANAGE THE EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS THAT

WERE BEING LEFT AT THESE LOCATIONS AND AT THE TEMPORARY MEMORIAL CONSTRUCTED BY THE COUNTY NEAR THE CRASH SITE. THESE TRIBUTES CONSISTED OF FLAGS, HATS, BUTTONS, POEMS, SIGNS, AND MANY OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF, PRIDE, AND PATRIOTISM. THE STORY OF FLIGHT 93 VERY QUICKLY CAPTURED THE PUBLIC'S IMAGINATION AND THE TEMPORARY MEMORIAL BECAME A DESTINATION FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.

THE MAKESHIFT, INFORMAL QUALITY OF THE MEMORIAL, IN MY OPINION, MADE IT EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL AND MEANINGFUL BECAUSE IT REFLECTED A GRASSROOTS EFFORT TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE FORTY PASSENGERS AND CREW WHO DIED ON THAT FATEFUL DAY. THE WORK OF THE FLIGHT 93 AMBASSADORS, VOLUNTEERS WHO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO VISITORS, ADDED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF VISITING THE SITE. STANDING AT THE TEMPORARY MEMORIAL WITHIN SIGHT OF A FORMER COAL MINE, FARMS, AND GAME LANDS, A VISITOR CAN FEEL AN EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL POWER THAT IS SIMILAR TO A VISIT TO GETTYSBURG OR ANTIETAM.

THE FLIGHT 93 MEMORIAL COMMISSION IS IN THE FINAL STAGES OF SELECTING A DESIGN FOR THE PERMANENT MEMORIAL AND THE LOCATION WILL BE NEAR THE CRASH SITE. THE COMMISSION, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, HAS WORKED HARD TO IDENTIFY BOUNDARIES FOR THE MEMORIAL AND TO SELECT JURORS FOR THE DESIGN COMPETITION WHO WILL REPRESENT A VARIETY OF

STAKEHOLDERS IN ADDITION TO DESIGN PROFESSIONALS. AS A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION, I HAVE BEEN MOST IMPRESSED BY THE DEDICATION AND PASSION OF EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS TO ENSURE THAT WE DEVELOP A MEMORIAL THAT PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE SACRIFICE OF THE FORTY PEOPLE WHO WERE PASSENGERS AND CREW AND THAT PLACES THE STORY OF FLIGHT 93 WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11. THE COMMISSION HAS POSTED THE DESIGNS OF FIVE FINALISTS ON ITS WEB SITE,

WWW.FLIGHT93MEMORIALPROJECT.ORG.

I PROVIDE THIS BACKGROUND TO THE COMMITTEE BECAUSE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE FOCUS OF THE EFFORT TO MEMORIALIZE THE PASSENGERS AND CREW OF FLIGHT 93 REMAIN ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEMORIAL IN SOMERSET COUNTY. I AM SUPPORTIVE OF A MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON TO RECOGNIZE THE SACRIFICE OF THE PASSENGERS AND CREW PROVIDED THAT IT DOES NOT DRAW ATTENTION OR SUPPORT AWAY FROM THE PERMANENT MEMORIAL. I DO NOT EXPECT THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN BUT I WANT TO EXPRESS MY CONCERN.

AS A HISTORIAN, I AM MORE CONCERNED THAT A MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON REFLECTS THE FACTS ABOUT FLIGHT 93. THERE IS MUCH THAT WE DO NOT KNOW AND MAY NEVER KNOW ABOUT THOSE TERRIFYING MOMENTS PRIOR TO THE CRASH. IF A MEMORIAL IS DEVELOPED, WE SHOULD AVOID TRYING TO FILL IN THE GAPS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE DO NOT KNOW THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE PEOPLE WHO

RESISTED THE HIJACKERS. WE DO NOT KNOW THE INTENDED TARGET OF THE HIJACKERS. THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT IS THE BEST SOURCE I KNOW OF TO OFFER GUIDANCE ABOUT THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS ON THAT DAY. THAT REPORT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT AN ACTIVE RESISTANCE TOOK PLACE DURING THAT FLIGHT THAT DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE CRASH IN A REMOTE FIELD IN PENNSYLVANIA. THAT STORY ALONE IS INSPIRATIONAL AND COMPELLING. WE DO NOT NEED TO IMPROVE UPON IT BY ADDING DETAILS THAT ARE NOT SUPPORTED BY PHYSICAL, WRITTEN, OR ORAL EVIDENCE. THE MEMORIAL CAN BE INSPIRATIONAL AND RESPECTFUL OF THE SACRIFICES AND THE LOSS AND STILL BE TRUE TO THE HISTORICAL RECORD. BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WE DO NOT NOW KNOW ALL THE DETAILS OF FLIGHT 93, WE WILL ALLOW VISITORS TO REFLECT ON WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED AND HOW THEY MIGHT HAVE REACTED IF THEY WERE IN THOSE AWFUL CIRCUMSTANCES. GOOD HISTORY ALWAYS INVOLVES IMAGINATION AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN HONOR THE PASSENGERS AND CREW EVEN IF WE HAVE TO IMAGINE WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THEIR FINAL MOMENTS.

THANK YOU.